

### **Amendments to the Specification**

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 12 with the following amended paragraph:

The central most portion of the dished-out upper surface 13 is recessed less than about 3 inches from the outermost thickness dimensions of the mortarboard, more preferably less than about 1 inch, and even more preferably less than about 0.5 inches. In the preferred embodiment, the central most portion of the dished-out upper surface 13 is recessed from about 0.25 inches to about 0.375 inches from the outermost thickness dimensions w of the mortarboard. Preferably, the radius of curvature or radii of curvature of the dished-out portions is/are significantly larger than the thickness dimensions and may be as large or greater than the width or height dimensions of the mortarboard. In the preferred embodiment, the dished-out area of the upper surface extends completely to one or more edges of the mortarboard, without any peripheral lip or raised edge portion projecting from the upper surface 13, so that a mason's tool can slide from the central portion of the upper surface 13 and over the edge of the mortarboard, without engaging any lip or encumbrance that would prevent free sliding motion of the user's tool such as a trowel or the like. Alternatively, there can be a slight peripheral lip or raised edge portion 15 can be included on the bottom and side surfaces of the surface holding area 12, as shown in Figure 1. The peripheral lip is preferably configured so that the adjacent recessed portion of the upper surface is less than about 0.5 inches, more preferably less than about 0.375 inches, and even more preferably less than about 0.25 inches.